

**CalSWEC II Mental Health Initiative**  
**Mental Health Competencies**  
**Advanced/Specialization Year**  
**August 2006**

**A Competency-Based Curriculum in Community Mental Health  
For Graduate Social Work Students**

**Introduction**

The Mental Health Competencies were developed by a collaborative partnership consisting of California practitioners, educators, community leaders, and other stakeholders from the fields of mental health and social work. The competencies support and promote recovery and wellness through independence, hope, personal development and resiliency for children, adults and older adults with serious emotional disturbances and severe mental illness. The competencies support the development and utilization of evidence-based and promising practices throughout the mental health system and promote culturally and linguistically competent services that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of local communities and focus on issues of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious/spiritual beliefs. Consistent with the shared vision of the mental health partnership, services are to be provided in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting with attention to consumer and family involvement at all levels of the mental health system.

The Mental Health competencies are divided into Foundation and Advanced/Specialization categories, which correspond roughly to the first and second years of the MSW program. The Competencies are based on a series of principle statements adapted from the Mental Health Services Act (December 2004) and the California Mental Health Master Plan: A Vision for California (March 2003).

<b>Foundation Competencies (1<sup>st</sup> Year)</b>	<b>Advanced Competencies (2<sup>nd</sup> Year)</b>
I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Generalist Practice	I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Mental Health Practice
II. Foundation Practice	II. Advanced Mental Health Practice
III. Human Behavior and the Social Environment	III. Human Behavior and the Mental Health Environment
IV. Workplace Management	IV. Mental Health Policy, Planning And Administration

## California Community Mental Health Curriculum Principles

*The CalSWEC Mental Health Competencies are designed to prepare an MSW level workforce to effectively provide mental health services to children, adults and older adults, and to contribute to a Mental Health system which:*

- 1. Promotes recovery/wellness through independence, hope, personal development and resiliency for adults and older adults with severe mental illness and for children with serious emotional disorders and their families.*
- 2. Provides culturally and linguistically competent services that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of the local community, and addresses issues of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious/spiritual beliefs.*
- 3. Strives to involve clients and families appropriately in all aspects of the public mental health system, including but not limited to: planning, policy development, service delivery and evaluation.*
- 4. Strives to create a partnership of cooperation and a shared vision of mental health services with other agency partners in the social service arena.*
- 5. Is an advocate for clients' rights.*
- 6. Promotes the development and use of self-help, peer support and peer education for all persons with mental illness and their families.*
- 7. Assists clients in their recovery to return to the most constructive and satisfying lifestyle of their own definition and choice.*
- 8. Provides persons with severe mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbances effective treatment and high priority for receiving services in the most timely manner.*
- 9. Provides services in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting.*
- 10. Supports a Children's System of Care consisting of family-driven, culturally competent, individualized, coordinated and integrated care with accountability to positive outcomes, which meet the unique needs of children and their families.*
- 11. Supports an Adult System of Care consisting of client driven, culturally competent, coordinated, integrated and effective service meeting the unique needs of adults and older adults with severe mental illness, their families and their extended social support system.*
- 12. Supports an Older Adult System of Care consisting of comprehensive and integrated services meeting the unique needs of older adults with severe mental illness, their families, their caregivers, and their extended community support system.*
- 13. Addresses the special mental health needs of all persons with severe mental illness and/or serious emotional disorders who also present with co-occurring substance abuse, psychiatric disabilities and/or other multiple vulnerabilities.*

## **I. Culturally and Linguistically Competent Mental Health Practice**

*This section builds upon the multicultural knowledge, values and skills delivered in the foundation year. Culturally competent practice acknowledges the integral role that culture plays in all individuals' lives, and its influence on not only the ability to adapt to life events, stresses, successes and failures, but also the willingness and ability to undergo treatment for mental health disorders. Advanced students demonstrate the ability to recognize, understand and appreciate their personal culture as well as the culture of others. In conducting mental health assessments, intervention and termination activities, advanced students demonstrate understanding of the impact and interaction of social and political categories of race, ethnicity, age, gender, class, ability, mental illness, sexual/affectional orientation, religion, education, profession, residence, marital status, etc. at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and community levels. Advanced students demonstrate attention to culturally guided community based interventions as well as a commitment to social justice.*

1. Student demonstrates knowledge and appreciation of personal culture and the cultural differences of others, and is able to identify the strengths of diverse populations. Student is able to identify how his/her personal culture may have positive or negative effects on service provision.
2. Student demonstrates knowledge of diversity within ethnic and cultural groups in terms of social class, assimilation, acculturation and the individual's way of being.
3. Student is able to develop treatment goals and interventions that are congruent with cultural perspectives across diverse groups.
4. Student demonstrates ability to critically evaluate the use of personal cultural values and norms in transcultural social work mental health practice. Student demonstrates skill in understanding and using personal identity and sense of self in same culture as well as cross-cultural interpersonal encounters.
5. Student demonstrates flexibility in using an array of culturally sensitive and relevant clinical skills in the teaching, advocacy, treatment, healing and case-management roles.
6. Student demonstrates understanding of the common elements of practice (e.g. making eye contact, initiating a handshake, etc.) and how these behaviors may clash with the cultural values of various ethnic and cultural groups.
7. Student demonstrates knowledge about: a) specific cultural features that may be present in various disorders, b) culture-bound syndromes, c) cultural explanations of illness, d) help seeking behaviors in diverse populations, and e) appreciation for traditional ethnic and cultural healing practices.
8. Student demonstrates knowledge and ability to work with interpreters in on-going treatment and long term treatment relationships.

9. Student is able to apply awareness of the effects of acute and accumulative trauma on the health status, health beliefs, help-seeking behaviors, health practices, customs and traditions of diverse consumers and communities.
10. Student demonstrates ability to work sensitively through differences in community mental health practice relationships with consumers, their families, colleagues, other professionals and the community.
11. Student demonstrates ability to critically evaluate the appropriate use of applied intervention models with diverse ethnic and cultural populations and other special needs groups.
12. Student demonstrates knowledge of immigration, migration, resettlement and relocation patterns of the major ethnic groups in the United States, in the context of both historical and current manifestations of oppression, racism, prejudice, discrimination, bias and privilege.
13. Student works to remove institutional barriers that prevent ethnic and cultural groups from using mental health services, and can identify appropriate macro-level interventions.
14. Student demonstrates awareness of the potential bias in clinical assessment instruments and critically interprets findings within the appropriate cultural, linguistic and life experience context of the consumer.
15. Student systematically collects and organizes observations, knowledge and experience to advocate for improved policies and delivery of services in the community.

## **II. Advanced Mental Health Practice**

*Practice competencies in the advanced/specialization year address the complexity and scope of mental health treatment, including specialized services with distinct sub-groups of individuals and families dealing with serious emotional disorders and severe mental illness. Competencies in this section include skills necessary to implement a variety of integrated models of intervention including advocacy, case management, psychosocial rehabilitation, team consultation, evidence-based practice, support of concepts of recovery, time limited treatment and nontraditional healing practices. These competencies are demonstrated in accordance with legal and ethical standards, principles of cultural diversity, commitment to social and economic justice and with sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable populations.*

### **Practice with Individuals**

1. Student demonstrates the ability to apply more advanced and complex analyses of human development and the life cycle in understanding the reciprocal interactions of bio-psycho-social factors.

2. Student is able to distinguish the relationship between theories and treatment in formulating a comprehensive, service goal oriented assessment.
3. Student demonstrates awareness of the mental status examination as part of an assessment to support diagnosis of children, adolescents, adults and older adults.
4. Student is able to diagnose the major mental health disorders using the DSM-IV-TR or other currently accepted diagnostic tools. In working with diverse racial, cultural, and lifestyle groups, student is able to identify the challenges and limitations of diagnosis.
5. Student demonstrates awareness of the prevalence of co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues, understands the impact of substance abuse on major mental health disorders, and is able to include this knowledge in assessment and treatment planning with consumers.
6. Student demonstrates awareness of the effects of acute, chronic and complex trauma upon the health status and help seeking abilities of individuals.
7. Student demonstrates awareness of issues related to the use of medication and medication information, non-pharmacological interventions, and psychiatric consultation in ethnic-specific populations within the scope of social work practice.
8. Student is able to apply research methodology as it relates to synthesizing, applying and evaluating evidence-based and promising practices. Student is able to assist consumers and their families in applying evidence-based practices that support positive outcomes.
9. Student demonstrates knowledge and appropriate utilization of models of treatment intervention with individuals.
10. Student demonstrates understanding of the limitations of evidence-based practices as they relate to the general population and to specific racial and ethnic groups.
11. Student demonstrates knowledge of the supervisor's tasks in relation to clinical, administrative, educational and supportive functions in public mental health agencies.
12. Student demonstrates awareness of supervisory skills in conflict resolution for the purpose of enhancing multidisciplinary collaborative relationships maximizing service delivery.

### **Practice with Families**

1. Student applies integration of family systems theories to the treatment needs of diverse consumers and their families.
2. Student is able to apply the principles and techniques of crisis and time limited treatment to high-risk families.
3. Student demonstrates awareness of core psycho-social rehabilitation competencies that underlie recovery-oriented practice.

4. Student demonstrates understanding of the recovery process, and is able to use self-help, peer support resources and other programs supporting recovery that are available in the community for consumers and families.
5. Student is able to assess family strengths and limitations in order to more effectively involve collaborative resources (i.e. schools, housing, rehabilitative services).
6. Student demonstrates ability to intervene in a family system where a member has a co-occurring substance abuse and major mental illness, to promote stability and relapse prevention.
7. Student is able to identify and respond to the mental health needs of children in out-of-home placements and their families.
8. Student appropriately utilizes various models of treatment intervention with families.

### **Practice with Groups**

1. Student is able to communicate effectively in an ethnically sensitive practice environment.
2. Student demonstrates understanding of a consumer's barriers to effective problem solving and emphasizes consumer empowerment via group process.
3. Student demonstrates awareness of how the 'use of self' affects group process.
4. Student is able to develop and maintain group structure.
5. Student demonstrates understanding of ethical standards that apply to group work.
6. Student demonstrates knowledge of evidence-based practice of positive outcomes as related to the consumer's compliance and accountability in group process.

### **Practice with Community**

1. Student is able to utilize principles of integrated services, continuity of care, case coordination, collaboration and effective discharge from services in work with consumers and families.
2. Student is able to demonstrate integrated case management including supported education, housing and employment programs, and alternatives to hospitals and other institutional 24-hour care settings. Student maximizes utilization of natural community support.
3. Student is able to utilize differing outreach and advocacy strategies for the benefit of consumers and their families.
4. Student demonstrates knowledge of specific strategies that empower consumers and their families and support self-determination.

5. Student demonstrates knowledge of the various funding streams associated with public health and human services at the local, state and national levels. Student understands how these funding streams relate to public mental health services.
6. Student is able to utilize outcome measures in developing and evaluating programs.
7. Student is able to apply the concepts of crisis intervention and intensive case management to community disasters.

### **III. Human Behavior and the Mental Health Environment**

*Competencies in this section allow students to build on basic knowledge and understanding of human behavior and development across the life span, and apply these theories to specialized circumstances and sub-groups within the mental health consumer community. Included are knowledge of the effects of homelessness, poverty, and co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse on individuals with severe mental illness, as well as an ability to utilize community and family resource support systems as interventions.*

1. Student demonstrates understanding of the unique mental health needs of special populations, including homeless and incarcerated individuals, children, women, older adults, gay and lesbian persons, and individuals with HIV+/AIDS, physical challenges, or co-occurring disorders.
2. Student is able to identify and utilize individual, family and community strengths in the assessment, service planning and service delivery phases. Student recognizes the importance of addressing multiple domains of functioning in each of these phases.
3. Student demonstrates understanding of contributing and interacting aspects of biology, personal attributes, coping style, trauma and developmental events. Student understands how these may affect children with serious emotional disturbances and adults with severe mental illness.
4. Student demonstrates understanding of the role of both natural community supports and resources, and other effective community programs (i.e. community-based support systems).
5. Student demonstrates understanding of the consumer in his/her family context and is able to help identify the role of family in the recovery process. The student understands the support needs of both the consumer and family members.
6. Student is able to use clinical outcome measures in developing and evaluating programs in a cross cultural milieu.
7. Student demonstrates awareness of public misperceptions regarding individuals with mental illness, and understands how these misperceptions may affect help-seeking behaviors and generate stigma and discrimination. Student has knowledge of published research investigating these commonly held misperceptions.

#### **IV. Mental Health Policy and Planning**

*Competencies in this area build on foundation knowledge of agency environments and practice and focus more broadly on policy development, program planning, evaluation and service delivery. Skills in administration and leadership are also addressed, as well as other strategies to enhance organizational effectiveness. Critical to the development of the student in these competency areas is an understanding of the role of the practitioner, the agency and the community (with emphasis on consumers and families), in shaping policy, influencing legislation and participating in the development and implementation of mental health service programs.*

##### **Policy**

1. Student demonstrates understanding of how political ideologies and social values influence the development of legislation, policies, program services and funding at all system levels.
2. Student demonstrates knowledge of current mental health policy and legislation and the implications of these for diverse and disenfranchised populations and communities.
3. Student demonstrates knowledge of the stakeholder community.

##### **Program Planning and Evaluation**

4. Student demonstrates understanding of the role of consumers and families in how community mental health programs are designed and implemented.
5. Student demonstrates understanding of how community mental health programs are designed and evaluated and the relationship between the two.
6. Student demonstrates understanding of the methods of scientific research and applies this knowledge to critically assess mental health services data to promote delivery of evidence-based practice.

##### **Service Delivery**

7. Student demonstrates knowledge of the range and effectiveness of community supports needed to sustain a “life in the community.”
8. Student demonstrates knowledge of state and federal laws that regulate community mental health services and protect the individuals and communities they serve.
9. Student demonstrates understanding of legal and ethical issues affecting the treatment and habilitation of persons with severe mental illness.

##### **Administration/Leadership**

10. Student demonstrates understanding of the various organizational structures of behavioral health systems at the local, state, national and international levels, and how these impede or enhance quality care.



11. Student demonstrates knowledge of organizational change theories and how they influence mental health systems.
12. Student demonstrates knowledge of the functions of administrative practice regarding planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, and evaluation.
13. Student demonstrates understanding of the administrative and systemic issues of providing direct services to individuals with serious emotional disturbances and severe mental illness in a consumer/family-driven, creative, flexible and culturally competent manner.
14. Student demonstrates understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a leader/manager to plan and develop systems that maximize the abilities and talents of diverse staff and consumer populations.